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Peace
River
Letters

by the

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"The Selkirk Settlers in Real Life"

"The Making of the Canadian West"

"Our Task in Canada"

Etc., Etc.

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SETTLERS LEAVING EDMONTON ON THE E. D. & B. C. RY. FOR THE PEACE RIVER COUNTRY

Foreword

THE following letters descriptive of a trip from Vancouver to the Peace River Country by way of Prince Rupert and Edmonton, were written for the press by the undersigned a few weeks ago. They seemed to interest so many that they are now published, by request, in this booklet form, for general circulation.

It has been the privilege of the writer to travel considerably over Canada and to give from time to time, through the printed page, some impressions of the places visited. He has no land to sell or "axe to grind," but, as a Canadian, he takes pleasure in imparting such information as he possesses, to people at home and abroad, thus making some humble contribution to the welfare and progress of this great Dominion.

These present letters, of course, deal with only one area of Canada and certain routes of travel. But others have had or will have their turn. Canada has been growing so rapidly that anything like jealousy between different parts of the country and different lines of travel is unthinkable. This wide country from ocean to ocean and from southern boundary line to the Pole, has room for all who are willing to develop its marvellous resources. And what will benefit one part will benefit the whole.

R. G. MacBETH.

Vancouver, B. C., Sept. 27, 1915.

VANCOUVER TO EDMONTON VIA PRINCE RUPERT.

ONE who had the fortune to be born west of the Great Lakes can remember with a sort of perpetual thrill that year in the early '80's when the first C. P. R. locomotive crossed the Red River and with its shrill whistle broke in the silence of the Great Lone Land. In the wide west the Canadian Pacific was the railway pathfinder and rested not till it drove its iron horses through the mountains to drink at the western sea. But as a matter of fact the Grand Trunk, on whose steamer the Prince George I travelled northward to Prince Rupert, was well up in years before the C. P. R. was born. One does not need to forget the railway that pioneered in the west to appreciate the fact that this country is big enough to require more roads than one to develop its practically illimitable resources. Hence we are glad to see the Grand Trunk and others coming west to grow up with the country.

The trip to Prince Rupert from Vancouver is now becoming well known, and so needs no elaborate description. There is just enough of the open sea to enable one to join with the poetic thought of Byron in his famous apostrophe to the ocean, the perennial wonder of the world. But for the most part the route is land-locked and sheltered so as to make the voyage one of unceasing pleasure even to those who prefer always keeping in sight of the solid earth. And all along the way the eloquent descriptive words of that brilliant Irish Governor-General of Canada, Lord Dufferin, were coming to mind. They were spoken at Victoria in 1876 in those stirring days when Confederation and the Carnarvon Terms were such burning questions.

DUFFERIN'S TRIBUTE

After touring for days on the coast the famous world-traveller said: "And now that I am back it may perhaps interest you to know what are the impressions I derived during the journey. Well, I may frankly tell you that I think British Columbia a glorious province, a province which Canada should be proud to possess, and whose association with the Dominion she

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ought to regard as the crowning triumph of Confederation. Such a spectacle as its coast line presents is not to be paralleled by any country in the world. Day after day for a whole week in a vessel of nearly 2,000 tons we threaded an interminable labyrinth of watery lanes and reaches that wound endlessly in and out of a network of islands, promontories and peninsulas for thousands of miles, unruffled by the slightest swell from the surrounding ocean and presenting at every turn an ever-shifting combination of rock, verdure, glacier and snow-clad mountain of unrivalled grandeur and beauty. When it is remembered that this wonderful system of navigation, equally well adapted to the largest line of battleship and the frailest canoe fringes the entire seaboard of your province, and communicates at points sometimes more than a hundred miles from the coast, with a multitude of valleys stretching eastward into the interior, while at the same time it is furnished with innumerable harbors on either hand, one is lost in admiration at the facilities for intercommunication which are thus provided for the inhabitants of this wonderful region."

GREAT EXPLORERS

These splendidly descriptive and amply justifiable eulogy on our coast line came to mind repeatedly as we swung out from Vancouver and passed along the waterway between mainland and island all redolent of the romance, tragedy and pathos of early navigators and explorers. Scenes made illustrious by the achievements of the great sea-rover George Vancouver are around us. And we had scarcely passed from these when we came to the point near Bella Coola Inlet where an equally illustrious land explorer left the impress of a wonderful accomplishment. For to this place but a few months after Vancouver had sailed into the inlet he named after his friend, Harry Burrard, there came overland from Montreal Alexander Mackenzie, the Northwest Fur Company leader, whose name is commemorated in that mighty river beyond the mountains. And on a rock near here, despite the presence of irate Indians, the persistent Scotchman painted the vivid inscription, "Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada by land, the twenty-second of July, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-three." We call that inscription vivid because back of it and breaking

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through it, there is the story of a man's invincible courage and almost incredible endurance.

PRINCE RUPERT

Now we are at Prince Rupert, in the early hours of a beautiful day with the sun throwing dazzling gleams on the harbor wavelets. No ordinary standardized city is Prince Rupert, with conventional streets and mathematically correct outlines. It rambles up from the splendid harbor over mighty rocks across which here and there are green spaces of lawn. Big trawlers are moored along the wharves unloading halibut of the finest variety. In salmon, halibut and cod the huge quantity of twelve million pounds of fish were received at Prince Rupert in July from the sea and the Skeena River. Down there by the harbor edge is the new two-million-dollar drydock built to accommodate the largest vessels that ply the Pacific, and, as proper in wartime, a detachment of our Canadian soldiers stand on guard. Yonder a refrigerator fish train is starting out for points in the United States via Edmonton, where additional cars with fresh-water fish from northern lakes are attached to help feed the eastern multitudes. Thus is our country getting to the markets of the world in new ways.

THE G. T. P.

By the Grand Trunk Pacific from Prince Rupert to Edmonton was a new experience. It is well known that the road cost the Dominion an unexpectedly large sum of money, but one feels that whether too expensive or not, the work was at any rate well done. Mr. B. B. Kelliher, a noted mountain engineer, added to his laurels by getting a grade so uniformly easy that he has a place in the temple of railway fame as "four-tenths-of-one-per-cent. Kelliher." Leslie's Weekly says he "realized the idealistic dream of making a feather-bed of hard steel." That is, of course, putting it rather too strongly, but the riding is remarkably smooth all the way along.

Little is seen along the route of the farming or ranching country, but there is plenty of it in the Bulkley, Nechacko and other valleys. One does see many implement agencies along the line, and they are not likely to be in lands

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where there is no business doing in that line. Much land is here to be possessed in the interests of agriculture, and nothing should stand in the way of the land and the actual settler getting together.

Prince George is an extensive town, for it has roamed over much territory under the influence of various interests, but somewhere hereabouts, supported by an extensive farming area, and as the meeting point for railways from Vancouver, Prince Rupert and the Peace River country, there will be a very considerable community at no distant date.

As we approach the famous Yellowhead Pass (which commemorates the flaxen-haired trader, Jasper Hawes, who had headquarters here in the long ago), the scenery becomes more majestic as the mountains gather more closely around us. Mount Robson is the last word in mountain scenery. Mightier than all the pyramids of Egypt put together, bedecked in its vast white garments of snow, crowned with what looked like a whirlwind and a snowstorm combined, we saw it afar towering like a grand chieftain amidst great peaks that are only less by comparison with this great monument of the Creator's power. Still, almost reverentially, beholding we pass on to Jasper Park, where amid pines and waterfalls there is a tent city of tourists. Then on down into the open prairie, with its smiling fields and comfortable homesteads, to Edmonton, the departing point for our Peace River trip.



EDMONTON TO PEACE RIVER

THE close of my last letter brought us to Edmonton, which I saw first of all as little more than a Hudson's Bay Company post a good many years ago, when we marched across from Calgary in the same brigade with Major-General Steele. Edmonton was at that time suffering from the effects of a bursted boom which had originated with Winnipeg "artists" in that line. Since that time another boom has come and gone but Edmonton has survived both, which in itself is a testimonial to its vitality.

There is more land within the city limits than necessary for the present inhabitants and a good many thousands more, but despite that fact, Edmonton is a quite remarkable city, with scenic advantages beyond that of ordinary prairie centres. For it is the capital of the wide Province of Alberta, with its almost endless variety of climate and products, the home of the Provincial University, the Church Colleges, and the centre of unusual railway activity. The Provincial Building, with its lofty dome is a fine piece of architectural massiveness, the University has spread itself over an extensive campus, and the Grand Trunk Pacific hotel, the Macdonald, looking out on the valley of the Saskatchewan, is unique in its class in Canada.

One is glad to be able to speak in praise of a hotel in Alberta without qualms of conscience, for the people of the Province have arisen in their might and voted the bar-room end of the business out of existence for all time. In a few months the liquor part of hotelkeeping will pass out of this great Province, and no legislature in the face of the popular vote and the growing determination to be rid of this unparalleled economic and moral curse will halt legislation or even consider the question of compensation.

Edmonton has survived the periods of inflation, but in consonance with many other western cities and towns, should fervently pray to be delivered forever more from the wiles and the witless follies of the professional boomster.

PROGRESS IN SETTLEMENT

There was a time when Winnipeg was looked upon by

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eastern people as about the farthest limit to which civilization could go and live. A well-known divine, still in that city, relates that when leaving Toronto for Winnipeg he was commiserated by his friends on venturing into such hyperborean regions, but in process of the years Winnipeg became the gateway to the new Middle West, and then Edmonton was considered to be about the limit northward. Slowly it came to be recognized as the entrance to another new wide area.

Now there is a third stage, because Peace River Crossing is the door to a hitherto unknown empire in the North. And this is a good thing for the human family, as the North has always been the mother of the strong nations of the world. Not in equatorial lands where a dreamy existence can be dragged out and shuffled through, without even the necessity of working for a livelihood—not there have the great peoples of the earth been cradled—but in the North, where there is some need for effort; where the crisp air gives a healthful tang to the atmosphere, and where the sweeping breeze puts iron into the blood of men. Hence, Canada should be glad that she is finding an ever-widening horizon, and that a hitherto unknown and wonderful North is coming to the front as the nursing mother of a virile breed of humanity.

PATHFINDERS

The history of the opening of this new northern country is full of romance and pathos. Honor is primarily due to the extraordinary men, who, in the days of the early fur companies, made the names of the Mackenzie, the Peace, the Athabasca and such rivers, household words, even in the older lands of Europe, and to the indomitable explorers, who, working wonders in path-finding, enriched the science of the world by their discoveries.

Even in our own generation it will be remembered that the late Sir John Schultz, of Winnipeg, brought this north country to the attention of the Senate at Ottawa, with the persistence characteristic of his enthusiastic Canadiapism. A committee was appointed, of which he was chairman, and this committee gathered an immense amount of information as to the possibilities of the great river basins of the North.

From that time settlers began to go into the untracked land in straggling twos and threes, but not until the shriek of the locomotive awakened the echoes of the vast unknown spaces was the North country definitely put on the map as a great field for the farmer and the stockraiser.

MCARTHUR ENTERS

The man who, above all others, is entitled to a place in our Canadian history for his faith and courage in thrusting the steel pathway into a territory marked only by the winding trails of the Indian and the trader, is Mr. J. D. McArthur, of Winnipeg. McArthur is a man of Glengarry, the Ontario county famed for Highland stalwarts and the language of Eden. He is a good representative of his native heath. Tall and strong and ruddy, he has a quiet manner and an unassuming way, but a student of human life will recognize in the face and head of the man a tremendous possession of power and courage for large undertakings. He has abundant reserve energy, and, though in this time of war and stress he is building more actual railway than any man in the world, he is making less fuss than some men would make over running a corner stand.

Of course, like most leaders, he has given proof of his genius for selecting men. There is Dr. J. K. McLennan, also a Glengarrian, who knows railroading from the ground up and who has an invincible capacity for looking after the details of railway supplies and the financing of such intricate problems as keeping these up over large uninhabited areas, as well as for securing right-of-way, station properties, and so on. McLennan studied and practised medicine with success, but others can do that who have no such ability as he possesses for railroading, and so he is back to that work again with McArthur. Then there is W. R. Smith, the able engineer, who is now general manager of McArthur's Dunvegan system. Others might be mentioned, but these are as well known in this district as the railway itself.

After working in the bush for himself, and then as a sub-contractor, Mr. McArthur broke into the world of railway work by doing successful work on C. P. R. contracts. Then he carried out with great success the big undertaking

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of the difficult 250 miles of the G. T. P. eastward from Winnipeg. That done, he turned his eyes westward again—for he is a great believer in the West—and began the construction of the Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway on his own account.

This road goes through the famous Peace River country to the borders of British Columbia, and will doubtless eventually link up with the Pacific Great Eastern running to Vancouver, as well as send out branches to Fort Vermillion to the North and Grande Prairie to the south. Then, while busy with this road, there was a mix-up in Alberta over the Government project of the Alberta & Great Waterways Railway to Lac La Biche and on to Fort McMurray—a mix-up that was only relieved when a new government got McArthur to take over that road altogether. The present objective of that railway is Fort McMurray, where there is said to be asphalt enough, if suitable, to pave a world of streets. Still another McArthur road is the Central Canada, running from McLennan on the E. D. & B. C. Railway to Peace River Crossing and then beyond that famous stream. Besides these, McArthur is building the Hudson's Bay Railway for the Dominion.

FROM EDMONTON NORTHWARDS

It was on the Edmonton, Dunvegan and B. C. Railway that we travelled out of Edmonton to McLennan at the present end of steel and then down the Smoky River by boat to the Peace River and the Crossing, to which now the Central Canada is graded. While the country passed through by the E. D. & B. C. to McLennan is picturesque, as at Lesser Slave Lake, and at many places capable of ranching and agricultural development, we are all looking forward to the Peace country to which it is leading.

From the end of steel at McLennan we drove over to the Beaver Crossing of the Smoky to take a boat to the Peace. It was interesting to find at the Beaver Crossing of the Smoky that some from far afield are not unmindful of this country, for here we found barges and scows being built for D. A. Thomas, the Welsh coal magnate, who has

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parties exploring now towards Fort Vermillion where oil fields are said to be in strong prospect.

The trip down the Smoky by boat was fine, and as we neared the Crossing, we ran into the mighty stream of the Peace, to which the Smoky is tributary. The view up and down the wonderful Peace River, navigable for hundreds of miles, is surpassingly grand. There is evidence for this not only in the vision of the living, but as testimony from the desire of the dead—for away up the lofty hill looking over the present Peace River Crossing town there is a fenced grave where lies the dust of a noted miner named "Twelve-foot Davis," who, after having travelled much over the world, left directions that he should be buried here in the then wilderness, where he could look down on the incomparable scenery of the Peace. He died miles away, but, as in the case of Robert Louis Stevenson and Pauline Johnson, his last wishes as to a resting place were fulfilled by friends. And so his dust reposes here on the hill and over him there is this striking epitaph: "H. F. Davis, born in Vermont, 1820; died at Slave Lake, 1893; Pathfinder, Pioneer, Miner and Trader. He was every man's friend and never locked his cabin door."

But while we are listening to the story we are at the river dock, and will leave the new town at the Crossing, as well as some of the country beyond, for the next letter.



PEACE RIVER CROSSING.

WE were at the landing place at the Peace River Crossing as we closed our last letter and had been listening to the sort of post-mortem testimony of "Twelve-foot Davis" (so-called from one of his mining claims) to the superb scenery in the midst of which his dust reposes. What is now called Peace River Crossing was, in fact, called Peace River Landing in the old days. The idea of the crossing has come partly with the ferry but chiefly with the railway, which is graded to the south bank, and which is going to bridge the wide stream on its way to the extraordinary farming and stock-raising areas beyond it to the west and north.

A COMING CITY

That there will be a city at Peace River Crossing is beyond question, though we do not know yet just what its name will be. And it is well for people at a distance to find out just where the city is to be before they tumble over each other in their mad eagerness to buy lots. My own conviction, after travelling over the whole country, is that the city will begin south of the river, swinging towards the railway station, and that the city will cross the river with the railway, when the bridge is built.

The main part of the city will, I believe, ultimately be on the north bank, where the railway company owns one of the most magnificent sites for a city in all this country, but until the crossing is made the building will be done mostly on the south bank.

I repeat my conviction that there will be a good big city in the position generally outlined above, but I repeat also my warning that people at a distance should know what they are doing and who they are dealing with before they make purchases of lots in the locality. I repeat this warning because away to the westward some sixty-five miles there was the case of Dunvegan. Simply because the railway company was called descriptively the Edmonton, Dunvegan & British Columbia Railway, in order to indicate its

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general direction through well-known but wide districts, men not connected with the railway, got hold of land around the old Hudson Bay Fort Dunvegan, miles north of where the railway was to run, and these irresponsible and reckless exploiters subdivided and sold to gullible people at a distance, literally thousands of utterly useless lots.

Having given this warning so that people may exercise their common sense and deal with responsible men, let me state some reasons that make me think there will be ere long a goodly city at the points on the south and the north banks of the Peace River, where the Central Canada Railway, which goes north from McLennan on the E., D. & B. C. to the great river, and later on will go as stated, beyond it.

The city at the crossing of the Peace River will be some 350 miles from its nearest big neighbor, Edmonton, and will be to the North country what Winnipeg is to the Middle West, and Edmonton is to the nearer North.

The situation of the new city at the crossing of the Peace River is peculiarly advantageous. The railway entrance to it for the last seven miles along the Smoky and the Peace makes a scenic route, which alone will be a great asset from the tourist standpoint. The place affords every facility for building a city whose sanitation, drainage and healthfulness will be distinctively good, once the proper equipment is established, while its place on a great stream, which is part of one of the most remarkable waterways of the world, will be unique.

A FARMING DISTRICT

The country to north of the river, tributary to the Crossing, extends westward, as we travelled over it by motor car for nearly seventy miles and is one of the finest agricultural areas to be found anywhere. We crossed over on August 11, and on every hand great fields of wheat, oats, barley, etc., were either reaped or ready for the binder. This was a surprise to us Westerners, and to a practical Ontario man who came with us that he might see for himself, and be able to speak with authority. The country is not yet settled at all thickly, because it was little use to

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come in before a railway was in sight, but the places that were farmed were splendid, far beyond our expectations, and beyond many of the districts in the Middle West which I have known for years as famous for farming excellence.

Besides seeing for ourselves, I talked with men who had been long in the country as farmers. One, who had been twenty-six years farming north of the Peace, said he only had one failure and that his experience as the owner of a threshing outfit enabled him to say that failures from any cause were very few.

We passed through the Blue Sky district westward, beyond the Peace, with some unusually fine crops and stopped for dinner at the prosperous home of Mr. J. L. Propst, a native of Oregon, who came out here only a few years ago. I was pleased to find that Mr. Propst was the farmer who, last spring, shipped from the end of the steel, ninety miles from his farm, the famous carload of wheat which graded up with the best in Winnipeg. He had grown the wheat in the usual way of his farming (but he knows how to farm) and then when he thought the steel was near enough to make it pay to haul some wheat out, he started. Spring came with a rush about that time, playing havoc with the sleighing, and it took seven teams of horses to take a load up the hill at Peace River Crossing, on the way to the end of the steel, some twenty-five miles farther on. But despite all this extraordinary expense, Mr. Propst, owing to the high quality of the grain, cleared 80 cents a bushel on the shipment. When the railway crosses the Peace and passes through this district one can easily see that the profits will be comparatively much greater. Farmers say they enjoy the winter, which if occasionally cold is uniformly dry, with ample sunshine, little wind and scarcely any drifting of roads. They attribute the early harvest to the unusually prolonged daylight in the summer months. The luxuriant peavine and other vegetation on every hand supported this contention.

In regard to water supply, where streams are not in evidence men say they get water easily by digging, and, doubtless, boring would bring quicker and better results.

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Wherever I had found written opinions of the country from some few years ago it was stated that the country was all right, but that it was too far from a railway. That objection is now being removed. I was told by several who had been over the unsurveyed country away north to Fort Vermillion, some two hundred and fifty miles from Peace River, that there were excellent possibilities for mixed farming in that direction. Wild hay is abundant, but I noticed that the best farmers have great fields of timothy.

STOCKRAISING

With the two big packing plants of Swift & Co., and Burns & Co. at Edmonton, with branches probably to be established farther north as occasion requires, men who go into stock raising are not likely to be at any loss for a market. Not long ago a man drove cattle down from Fort Vermillion to the Crossing. They arrived in good condition and this proved a profitable enterprise. So far the farmers have been able to find a local market for most of their products, but the advent of the railway will open larger markets both at home and at a distance.

GOOD TYPE OF SETTLERS

The character of the people in the present town at Peace River Crossing is a factor to be taken into account in estimating the future of the place. There are about 800 of them, where a year ago there were only 100, and the fact that a few days ago this newly incorporated village with all the ordinary desire for new establishments, gave a substantial majority for prohibition, shows that the people there place a proper estimate on the value of character as against mere expansion of commercial concerns. People who come in hereafter will take on the complexion of this law-abiding and earnest community, and it is a fine thing to know that the new city will grow up without the debasing influence of the bar-room.

I had been in many frontier towns from Lake Superior to the West coast on Saturday nights, but I was impressed on the Saturday night we spent at Peace River Crossing, with the quiet, orderly and self-respecting behavior of the

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people of the town, and the additional hundreds of railway men in the neighborhood. Churches and schools, and a nice cottage hospital have been built, and the people seemed to me to take a proper pride in the good name of their town. All this tends to good results in business for law and order and decency become an economic asset to a community. Hence our estimate of the character of the Northern communities is an element in considering their future. And now that I have set down these points as to the future of Peace River Crossing let me add that I am not directly or indirectly a dealer in real estate, but as a Canadian I rejoice in seeing with my own eyes in our fair Dominion these new centres which make "the bounds of Empire broader."

NO DEPRESSION

The war and general depression has had little effect in these new districts as they are necessarily as yet self-contained and self-supporting with the farmer as their mainstay. In fact the war, and depressed conditions elsewhere are really helping these new northern communities by restraining the undesirable speculative movements which are the curse of so many places in the early stages of their history. And in consequence there is a general feeling of optimism accompanied by a proper appreciation of true and conservative values. If the people on the outside are as sane and careful as the people who live and do business in the North these great northern areas will not be handicapped in their progress by mad booms in real estate.

ON TO FORT DUNVEGAN

Crossing the Peace at this point we went on to Fort Dunvegan. As already mentioned, we travelled over this part of the route by motor, going at a reasonable rate and stopping at many points. We were fortunate in having as chauffeur a tall, sinewy ex-Minnesota farmer, rejoicing in the Dickensian name of Oliver Twist. He could take a car to pieces and put it together in less time than it would take most men to wonder why it was not working properly. He brought us through in safety over some pretty rough roads.

The end of the journey at Fort Dunvegan furnished an amusing incident. An artist east had a well-known picture called "The March of Civilization," representing the meeting of a ploughman from eastward and an Indian from the opposite direction. I was reminded of the picture as we came down the long hill at Dunvegan, where the fort was founded years ago by a Highlander official of the Hudson's Bay Company. There has been little growth here, except as suggested already, in the way of surveyor's plans for a town that has not materialized. So as we came down with our motor to the river bank we found there several aboriginal inhabitants with their ponies and wagons lined up along the steep river bank. Our chauffeur went ahead forgetting that these ponies were not city trained. We passed some in safety, but the largest team, tied to back wagon wheels (a bad plan) turned tail and started to run, drawing the wagon fiercely behind them by the tie ropes. The dusky owner of the outfit tried manfully to stop the runaway, but when he saw that he would get run over he took a wild leap over the steep bank, his dark hair flying behind him. As he shot downwards, the horses were hard after him, but they shied off at the bank so suddenly that the swing broke the tie lines, leaving the horses on the bank, but tossing the wagon, box and all, after the owner, clear out into the river, whence it was rescued with ropes.

And as we went down to the ferry we found another mark of civilization's march in a raft on which was loaded a billiard table and other such things by a man who had come down the river looking for new pastures in some of the growing places of the north. Whether he found a resting place or not we can not tell, as we went on to the ferry to be cabled over by the swift current of the mighty Peace River, from whose south bank we were to take a wagon southward through the woods till we would strike the Spirit River and Grande Prairie districts. But of these we shall speak in the next letter.



DUNVEGAN AND SPIRIT RIVER

DANCE more then we cross the Peace River from Fort Dunvegan to the south on the way to the Spirit River and the Grande Prairie. I confess there was something pathetic to me in the old Hudson's Bay fort which the McLeod, who founded it, called after the Scottish seat of the clan. There was pathos in the association of the ideas of the fort and the ancestral home of the founder. Grim and hardy old fur-trader though he was the love of his motherland was strong within him. And when he built the log fort on the banks of the Peace under the towering hills nearly a century ago his Highland reticence went down before the swelling tide of his love for old Scotland to such a degree that even though the hunters and trappers around him failed to understand he would name the place after the home of his valiant clan.

THE HUDSON'S BAY MEN

Few people understand how much we owe to the remarkable men of the old Company for the fact that there was kept alive, amid the wilds on the North American Continent, that devotion to the traditions of the homeland which held this land for the British Crown. One recalls, in this connection, the story of another Chief Factor in the far North who, receiving by the annual mail the news of Waterloo, many months after the event, called his staff around him and gave three cheers for the King and the Iron Duke.

Honorable, courageous, loyal and true, these old Hudson's Bay men ruled with such paternal spirit that for the two hundred years of their absolute sway over half a continent no murmur of rebellion was ever heard. In fact Dunvegan, founded as a trading post and nothing more by Chief Factor McLeod in the old days, was a much finer and more honest achievement than Dunvegan, the townsite exploited so unfairly by some men of our own day.

TOWARDS SPIRIT RIVER

These thoughts were with us as we crossed over the silent flowing Peace on the ferry run by a stalwart old

frontiersman, who had seen much water run under his boat in the years bygone. For the first seven miles or so southward from the river the road lies through a wooded country which bears ample evidence of being good farming land, if cleared, but it will not be cleared while men can get locations on the open prairie. And I am not sure but we are over-anxious about getting the wooded country cleared, for has not the experience of Ontario and other older countries proven that too extensive clearing is detrimental in many ways, and have not these countries found it advisable to resort to reforestation? So we should not be too quick about clearing the bush off these northern slopes by the Peace River.

As we came southward we begin to get to the prairie section again and shortly we enter a well-settled and prosperous farming district known as the Spirit River settlement, so-called from the stream which runs through the section. The name of the river challenges our enquiry and three answers are forthcoming. Two of them at least are charged with romantic interest. The real name was Ghost River and one story is that a great battle took place here between two Indian tribes and that the ghosts of the slain continued to haunt the banks. Another story says that the Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights are so wonderfully beautiful here and come shimmering so close to the earth that the Indians looked upon them as the ghost of their ancestors. The more prosaic story is that, in comparison with the big ravine through which it flows, the little stream is only the ghost of the mighty river which once dug out the huge chasm. All these are interesting enough and it is good in our commercial day to keep on the map names that knit us to the mystic elements of human life.

It is from Spirit River settlement that McArthur's Edmonton-Dunvegan Railroad is now building a branch southward to the Grande Prairie in order to serve the interests of this whole wide farming area. There will be a good town at this Spirit River point. It will not likely be where the present village stands, but a mile or more to the northward where the Spirit River station and townsite are to be situated. Those who live and are doing business in the present village recognize this fact and are ready to move their buildings

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when the road is in operation. In fact it was characteristic of things western to find one man building a public hall on skids so that it could be readily shifted to the proper location later on.

The country around here is excellently adapted for agriculture and stock raising and is well settled. We had a meeting at this point in connection with a mission established some years ago, and, though haying and harvesting were on, people came in big wagons from all points until the building was crowded to the doors. And I say again that a country where the people are manifesting such interest in religious matters is on the way to the permanent prosperity which moral stamina produces.

THE MOUNTED POLICE

An interesting event here during our stay was the arrival of a member of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, that remarkable body of men who for forty years past have so fearlessly, so unflinchingly and so wisely looked after the safety of settlers and the administration of law over a territory of prairie and mountain larger than half a dozen European countries. They have not been permitted to go out to the present war, but for sheer devotion to duty and self-sacrificing effort no regiment of equal age has a more splendid record than these riders of the plains whose present commanding officer, Colonel Perry, is a fine embodiment of all the best traditions of the force.

LAW ENFORCED

The visit of the Mounted Police to Spirit River occurred because the watchful eye of the officer of the district saw that a growing village and large railway camps would be the better of oversight, lest illicit liquor sellers and such like would get a footing. The presence of an earnest, determined man in the scarlet and gold has always had a wonderfully quieting effect on people of artificially exuberant spirit. This particular officer, finding that some few people who either did not recognize or care for the Sabbath, were in the habit of coming into the village on that day for supplies, posted a notice in every place of business giving warning that after a certain date named, no Sunday trading

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would be allowed. The notice was worded in such a way as to allay any feeling of resentment on the part of those who had fallen into a bad habit, and yet had the firmness of tone which indicated that no trifling with the law would be allowed. A policeman on the plains or in our towns and cities is not popular with certain evil elements, nor even with some unthinking citizens, but a fairly close observation of human society all over this wide country of ours convinces me that policemen are among the foremost friends of an orderly and progressive civilization.

FARMING AREAS

We visited many farms in this locality, and found every farmer highly satisfied with the country, and almost wildly jubilant over the fact that a railway was being built which would bring a market to their doors, or at least put even distant markets within their reach. And it is worth noting here that this whole section of the country as well as the Pouce Coupe district westward, and the Grand Prairie southward, is looking towards British Columbia mining areas and its seaboard for an outlet to markets that will be remunerative.

The Pouce Coupe district is the 3,500,000-acre tract that was conveyed by the British Columbia Government to the Dominion Government in lieu of certain coal areas in British Columbia, granted by the Dominion to that Province. It is really part of the Peace River country, and is becoming rapidly settled, even far in advance of railway construction, for it is said to be fully up to the best country farther to the east along the Peace. One can easily see that the opening up of this country close up against the Province by the sea will mean a mutually advantageous condition of things for both.

RECIPROCAL TRADE

And the Peace River country not only wants to send its products of field and dairy, and such like to British Columbia, but it will want immense quantities of the fruit and fish that British Columbia can furnish. It is quite possible that some time in the future fruit of various kinds may be grown on the Grande Prairie, where wild fruit abounds, but that, in any case, could not be for many years.

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In the meantime the fruit of the coast province will become to the thousands of settlers in the Peace country not only a luxury, but a veritable necessity, and therefore, it is quite certain that once the railway facilities are furnished a large trade in fruit will be developed. In return the Peace River country can ship its vegetables and roots to British Columbia mining areas as well as its grain to the sea. And so the Peace will ultimately have access not only to British Columbia, but the Oriental lands beyond. All this will come in time.

ON TO GRANDE PRAIRIE

But we must be hastening on our journey towards the Grande Prairie from the Spirit River. Our guide and driver in wagon over this part of the way, some sixty miles, was Mr. Forbes, the Presbyterian missionary, an Aberdeen man, who after some years at Fort Saskatchewan, felt called to go to the Grande Prairie country to spy out the land as a field for future missionary effort. He was so impressed with the country as one sure to be soon settled that he located at the Grande Prairie and I may touch on his work there later. In the meantime we are on the trail together. The road lies for some distance over the wooded country of the Saddle Hills, where the going is slow, but, as mentioned already, we are not to undervalue the forest sections. In fact, all along the way we saw special notices posted warning against doing anything to cause destructive fire, and even the Dominion Government maps recently issued have detailed warnings against forest destruction, printed in red ink to attract attention. There are roadhouses on the way where one can get meals and for the most part these are well kept.

In one stopping place the enterprising innkeeper had a small gramophone in the wash-house, where travellers might have free selections all the way from Stephen Adam's great songs to Harry Lauder's comedy. All of which reminded us of the way in which the pilgrims in Chaucer's Canterbury tales whiled the time away.

"And the women sang between the rougher voices of the men
Like linnets in the pauses of the wind."

At another point we stayed over night at the home of a hospitable Swede, whose buildings and farm gave every evidence of great industry and thrift. His crops of wheat and oats were excellent, while his immense garden was filled with every possible kind of root and vegetable that could be used for human food. His new binder was standing ready for use on a great field of ripening wheat. In that he was fortunate because there is as yet some shortage of farm machinery in this northern country so that a good many farmers have to be joint owners and users of it.

The difficulty of getting machinery in before the railway is apparent for the long winter haul from Edson or Edmonton was not to be undertaken lightly. But we can rely on the implement agent and manufacturers of the East to see that this want is supplied when the steel is there. In the meantime farmers who are only getting started have escaped the possibility of overloading with implements and the accompanying promissory notes or mortgages. I have known some good settlers in the west who had to move away from their first holdings because they had bought too heavily and found that pay day has a way of coming around. That there is some shortage of farm machinery up here is a tribute to the productivity of the country, but it is also a guarantee that settlers who have learned the lesson will not burden themselves untimely. But we are coming over the ridge and the Grande Prairie proper bursts on our sight in the morning sun and of it I will write in the next letter.



GRANDE PRAIRIE

AT the close of my last letter we were coming near the goal of our 70-mile drive from Spirit River to Grande Prairie for as we came over the brow of the ridge at Twin Lakes the vision of the plain to which had been given the finely appropriate French designation burst full upon our sight. The way had been long and the roads of the frontier type, but all four of us who rode in the democrat and walked betimes, were inured to western travel by the experience of years, though the writer was the only one who could claim the West as his birthplace. None of us were land dealers or townsite speculators. The party consisted of Presbyterian ministers, the pioneer from Edmonton, the mission superintendent of Alberta, the first missionary to the Grande Prairie and the present writer, and our purpose in visiting the North country was to plan for supplying its religious needs. But we were all enthusiastic Canadians and were not unmindful of the fact that we were looking through a portion of the land whose development would add greatly to our beloved Dominion. And on both counts we could enter into the feelings of Mr. Forbes as he said:

"When Mrs. Forbes and I, after our long trip from Edmonton six years ago, came over the ridge and saw the plain in the glory of autumn dress, I took off my hat and gave a cheer, for to us it seemed as the promised Land."

And one could understand how even a self-controlled and undemonstrative Aberdonian like Mr. Forbes would thus give vent to his feelings. For before the eyes of those pioneers there stretched the wide-reaching plain, diversified by shady groves and sparkling lakes, all clad in the splendors of the autumn and soft in the gentle atmosphere of Indian Summer. Only we felt the other day that we were looking on a greater sight, for the tiller of the soil had come in the wake of the missionary and on the noble plain was now built an incipient town, while away on every hand we beheld fields of waving grain, glowing in the golden color of wheat or glistening in the nodding plumes of the oatfields. And not without emotion we drove down past the fine hospital erected by the women of the Canadian Presbyterian

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Church at the request of their missionaries, to the manse where Mrs. Forbes received the dust-laden travellers with the hospitality which had cheered many a lonely and discouraged pioneer on to new efforts and victory.

Grande Prairie is the general designation given to a wide area of country which stretches westward to the Rockies and is certainly destined to be one of the great agricultural areas of Canada. There is a village here known as Grande Prairie City and doubtless a considerable town will grow up in this locality to serve the needs of the large farming community which will here win clean wealth from the fertile soil.

GRANDE PRAIRIE CITY

So far the town is not a large one, but people are anticipating and making preparations accordingly. Hence we find here two ambitious weekly newspapers which retail the news of the community and keep it in touch with the movements of the big world outside. It seems there must always be two newspapers as in the nature of things there are two sides at least to every question and under a free responsible system of government it is healthy to have these sides presented for public consideration. Nothing can be gained by one-sidedness and one paper in a place has to be very colorless and nondescript. On the other hand people should be on guard against the danger of wearing an unchangeable party tag and a wise man will take the paper of the opposite political party as well as his own so that he may be preserved from the danger of being like the character in the famous opera who sang:

"I was always ready at my party's call

And ne'er did any thinking for myself at all."

For when a man ~~tries~~ ^{begins} to think he ceases to be of value to a community.

Besides the two papers the village of Grande Prairie has such modern improvements as electric light in at least a few buildings, it has one local policeman whose duties are not onerous, and even the ubiquitous Chiraman has invaded this northern town to wash and iron after the manner of his race.

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A NORTHERN HOSPITAL

Then there is the hospital already referred to as built under missionary auspices. This particular hospital has been a perfect Godsend to this North country where without it the services of trained nurses could not be secured. And no one knows better than the doctor in a remote district how soothing to the body and mind of a lonely, homeless patient is the gentle ministry of a woman of skill and tender devotion to duty.

With the advent of the railway now near at hand this hospital will be more than ever required for the care of railwaymen who either by accident or otherwise are incapacitated. Verily all such shall be sure to rise up and call the founders of this northern hospital real benefactors to humanity.

HARVEST FIELDS

As to the adaptability of the Grande Prairie country for farming we had ocular proof for we were there in the opening of the harvest and saw the splendid fields being reaped one after the other. Of course, here, as elsewhere, much depends on the way in which the land is farmed. Brought up on a farm, I have observed the methods of farming in many places but confess a strong preference for the steady intensive methods of the best type of Ontario farmer as against the hasty extensive methods so often practiced in new countries. We saw both kinds at many places all over the Peace River country. In some cases men were evidently scratching the soil enough to grow something that would satisfy the literal requirements of the Homestead Act and the results were not pleasant to behold. In other cases men were getting down to real business and the fruit of their labor was clearly visible.

And in this connection I wish to say, without reserve, after seeing wheat fields all over the continent, that the finest wheatfield I have ever beheld was on the Grande Prairie some three miles or so east of the town. There were some 30 acres in that field uniformly tall, clear of weeds and with heads bending heavy to the harvest. The owner of the field was a quiet, unassuming young bachelor named William

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Drynan, who hailed from Brant County, Ontario. When asked as to the yield, he modestly thought it would be 40 bushels to the acre, and as far as I could judge he was below the mark. Oats on both sides of the Peace River run often to 80 and 90 bushels, and a man from Ayr, Ontario, told me he knew of it going up to 100. As the railway contractors are buying it up for their horses and mules, one can readily see that the men who are doing real farming are getting along.

CLIMATE

The climate, while we were in the Peace River country, was ideal for the harvest time, and the harvest was early but I made inquiries from men whom I knew personally and who had lived in other parts of Canada and the States, and they all expressed preference for the Peace River climate. They say that they are more free from storms winter and summer than elsewhere, that the snow rarely drifts, that the Japan currents from the Pacific greatly modify the cold, and that the clear sunshine is almost constant.

As to the important question of water supply we made inquiries at many points and generally the answer was given that water was easily accessible by digging where streams and rivers were not at hand. But my impression is that deeper wells secured by boring would be desirable. No doubt this will come about in time.

DOWN TO THE SMOKY

It was with a good deal of regret that we parted from the people of Grande Prairie, who had treated us most hospitably and had given us, as others had done, good congregations and audiences for services and lectures. But we had a long drive still ahead of us, with two meetings, then one hundred miles down the Smoky River to the end of steel, and the Smoky was beginning to fall rapidly in the harvest moon, so we must press on. From Grande Prairie down to the river we found a good fertile stretch of land, in fact one of the most fertile we had seen, for at least one field of wheat was greater in extent and only less in quality than the one I have already described. Settlers have been in here for a few years and are doing well but are glad to

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see the incoming of a railway so as to get their stuff out to markets.

NEW CHURCHES

An interesting feature of this part of our journey was the holding of two meetings in two substantial log churches which were being built by the people under the leadership of Mr. Forbes. The first meeting was at noon at Glen Leslie, where the people gathered in goodly numbers, served a dinner in the unfinished building and then waited for an extra hour for a meeting addressed by the visitors. In the evening at Bezanson, a point on the Smoky, we held another meeting. The church building had no doors or windows as yet but the people were there, it being evident as one speaker said, that they were not as fearful of draughts as some folk in more advanced communities. There could be no lights but the night was fine and if the speakers and the hearers did not see each other clearly the accoustics were good and everyone seemed to enjoy the meeting, so that special thanks were extended to the visitors for coming. Thus do we see the quality of these settlers, and this quality makes most assuredly for prosperous days to come.

BEZANSON

Bezanson is a point on the Smoky River where it is joined by two other rivers, the Wapiti and Simonette, and it is understood that the Canadian Northern Railway will cross the Smoky here. People are showing their faith in the certainty of the coming railway by beginning to build a town on the high banks of the river, which is a most admirable location for a town if the road comes along to do its share. Substantial buildings are already erected and a Winnipeg man was on the way up with machinery for a grist mill. I trust that their hopes will be realized.

A HEALTHY COUNTRY

It is a tribute to the healthfulness of the locality to find here an American citizen who after trying many remedies and places for his wife's health, comes up here for the greater part of each year, with the result that the lady's health is now of the best, as I can testify from partaking, in

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the primitive home, of its generous hospitality. Health is a great discovery and these good people were loud in their praises of the climate of the place.

ALONG THE BIG SMOKY

As anticipated, the water in the Smoky was low and the boats making their final trip were apt to be overladen. So we had to wait all the next day at a crossing for the boat which should have reached us in the morning from down the river. Like Mark Twain, we felt that we would give a good deal for a boat that could run on a heavy dew. But at last the boat came, a home-made affair, half scow and half punt, equipped with a gasoline engine, but without any life-saving apparatus that we could see.

We get on board, several of us, seated on a plank or on pieces of baggage, and in the evening start down the swirling, swift-flowing stream. The man at the wheel did well, but a fog coming up about midnight we ran into some boulders in a rapid, with the result that our frail craft was in danger of going to pieces in a dangerous place, but we bumped through and then the skipper decided to get to shore and tie up till daylight as the worst rapids were yet to come. So the most of us got off the boat and built a huge fire on the wide, stony beach, where we sat around till daylight, entertained at intervals by the yelping of foxes and coyotes prowling nearby. In the morning we continued on our way and, reaching the end of the steel, we were into Edmonton in due time. Going and coming we were much pleased with the fine appearance and the generous hospitality of this city whose future is assured.

VANCOUVER AGAIN

But after the trip was over we came back to Vancouver, well pleased with the beauty of the queenly city by the sea to whose wealth and progress, all points, east, west, north and south, will contribute in ever larger measure in the coming days. I am glad to have had the privilege of taking you, gentle reader, with us on a journey through one of the most wonderful parts of the goodly land of Canada. Our hope

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is that we may all live up to the great opportunities and responsibilities which residence in such a country imposes upon us.

R. G. MacBETH.



SHOWING WOODED BANKS ON PEACE RIVER. NEAR THE CROSSING

